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ABSTRACT

This research was aimed at determining the success of the program approach of a rather unique prevocational training program designed to meet the needs of young adult American Indians from low income backgrounds. The Great Lakes Apprenticeship Center (GLAC) approach utilizes some education principles which have wide support in adult education literature. The criterion used to judge program success were the former students' own evaluations and job improvement after training. The trainee evaluations were generally positive. Also, substantial improvements were made in the trainees' pay levels and hours worked after training. The study reveals that: (1) some important adult education principles facilitate effective programming for the disadvantaged learner and (2) if such principles are properly implemented, it is possible to reduce the gap between the underemployed and those with relatively better employment records. (Author)

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AN EVALUATION OF THE GREAT LAKES APPRENTICESHIP CENTER: INSIGHTS INTO EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMING FOR DISADVANTAGED ADULTS

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SUMMARY

Vast sums of money have been spent in recent years on programs for the disadvantaged adult. However, equal efforts have been lacking in evaluating the effectiveness of the few programming innovations developed.

This research was aimed at determining the success of the program approach of a rather unique pre-vocational training program designed to meet the needs of young adult American Indians from low income backgrounds. The Great Lakes Apprenticeship Center (GLAC) approach utilizes some education principles which have wide support in adult education literature.

The criterion used to judge program success were the former students' own evaluations and job improvement after training. The trainee evaluations were generally positive. Also, substantial improvements were made in the trainees' pay levels and hours worked after training.

The study reveals that: (1) some important adult education principles facilitate effective programming for the disadvantaged learner and (2) if such principles are properly implemented, it is possible to reduce the gap between the underemployed and those with relatively better employment records.

An Evaluation of the Great Lakes Apprenticeship Center: Some Insights Into Educational Programming for Disadvantaged Adults*

L. M. Swan and Jim De Vries**

INTRODUCTION

Traditional education programs have failed to meet the needs of the disadvantaged. American Indians in particular have lacked equal educational opportunity. The Special Senate Subcommittee on Indian Education (14) described Indian education as a "national tragedy." Coleman (2) and others concur with these findings. The scope of the problem is revealed by some of the statistics cited by President Nixon (8) in his address on Indian Affairs. American Indians have an average education of only six years. The dropout rate for Indian students is twice the national average. Unemployment among Indians is ten times the national average. The average income of Indians is only $1,500 per year. It is clear that generally American Indians are educationally and occupationally disadvantaged.

Educators must find alternative approaches to educational programming for the disadvantaged such as American Indians. What can be done?

In discussing job training for American Indians, Minear (7) suggests that success can only be achieved by programs designed specifically for the Native American. Others concerned with the education of disadvantaged adults emphasize certain principles in program development and implementation. Priority principles can be summarized in two general guidelines: (1) programs must be specifically designed to meet the needs of small homogeneous groups of disadvantaged learners (1:62, 11:51, 15:277), (2) the value set of the learner must be respected and his self-esteem enhanced by the learning experience (1:59, 10:112, 13:187).

THE GREAT LAKES APPRENTICESHIP CENTER (GLAC)

The Great Lakes Apprenticeship Center (GLAC) located in Green Bay, Wisconsin began operations in July, 1969. It is funded by a grant from the U. S. Department of Labor and administered cooperatively by the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council and the Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute. The project staff includes a director, teacher, counselor and two job developers.

The GLAC program was designed specifically to serve the needs of disadvantaged Native Americans (16). The clientele, young Indian men, are from low income backgrounds, primarily high school dropouts, and were unemployed for up to one year prior to entering the program. The GLAC program aims at helping participants qualify for, obtain, and hold better jobs.

Program Services

Training, counseling and placement are the three basic services of the program. Depending on the participant's need, he may receive any or all of these services.

About 13 percent of the participants are considered qualified for on-the-job training at the time they come to the center and are placed directly when a suitable position is available. If not ready for placement, they enter training. About 15 trainees are accepted for each eight week training/counselling session.

Training depends on the individual's needs. Two weeks are devoted to orientation and evaluation to determine competency and vocational goals. The training from the third through the eighth week aims at improving basic skills in reading, vocabulary and math. General knowledge about the work world is acquired through field trips, films, guest speakers, written material and discussion groups. A variety of materials and approaches is used throughout the program.

*Partial funding for this project study from the Center for Applied Sociology.

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Learners choose materials and work on areas which they feel best meet their individual needs and learning styles.

The job developers work closely with the trainees in obtaining jobs and do some follow-up after placement. Job placement may come at any point in the eight week period depending on the trainee's qualifications and availability of position. Many receive on-the-job training after being placed. Trainees not considered qualified for placement after eight weeks in the program may be held over for further training or placed in other institutions such as the Northeast Wisconsin Technical Institute.

Personal contact with the trainee and a respect for his cultural heritage are emphasized. Personal contact is facilitated by keeping the program small. Respect for heritage is achieved through the sensitivity of the staff who are mostly Indians. Also, the program is under the control of an Indian Council, The Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council. Regular sessions on Indian history, and culture, help the students with self understanding and evaluation. Extensive individual and group counseling is available to the trainees throughout the program. Program flexibility places responsibility on the learner to choose not only the content and method of training but also his personal vocational goals.

Trainees

Background

The GLAC serves American Indians throughout Wisconsin. The typical trainee is an 18-21 year old American Indian male who is classified as a disadvantaged person, but who is not receiving public assistance at the time he enters the program. He is single with no dependents but classified as a head of a household and a primary wage earner. He is as likely to be a high school graduate as not, but not likely to have received previous job training. He had been in the labor force from one to nine years. During the last year before training he was unemployed for more than fifteen weeks and earned less than $3,000. The reasons for being unemployed were primarily a lack of education (of the right type or not enough) and transportation. The incidence of unemployment due to personal problems such as excessive drinking or trouble with the law was not great. A more detailed description of trainee background appears in the Appendix.

How They Learn About the Program

Trainees learn about the program primarily through close personal contacts (Table 1). Forty-six percent of the trainees said family and friends were their primary source of information about the GLAC.

TABLE 1

SOURCES OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE GLAC

N = 49		
Source	Number	Percent
Friends	14	29
Family	8	17
Inter-Tribal Council	7	14
University Extension	3	6
Employment Service	7	14
Other Government Officials	2	4
Other Sources	5	10
Don't remember	3	6
	49	100

Why They Join

The trainees initially view the program as a source of job mobility. Asked to identify the reason(s) for joining the program, the large majority listed some work related motive (Table 2). Very few said they joined because the program provides the trainees with income or because of family pressures.

TABLE 2

REASONS FOR JOINING THE PROGRAM

N = 48		
Reason	Number*	Percent
To obtain work	36	75
To obtain better work	27	56
To learn necessary skills	29	60
To get some money	11	23
Was told to go by family	2	4
	105	100

*Trainee could list several reasons for joining.

Program Completion

An examination of the relationship between trainee background characteristics and success in completing the program revealed that those trainees who had been most successful before training in terms of employment and education were the most likely to complete training. Table 3 shows that trainees who failed to complete high school were twice as likely to drop out or be terminated from the program as those who completed high school.

TABLE 3

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION AND PROGRAM COMPLETION

N = 168*				
Program Completion	Education (years completed)			
	Less than 12 years		12 years or more	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Completed	59	63	61	81
Did not complete	34	37	14	19
	93	100	75	100

*Does not include 25 participants who were placed directly on a job.

A similar relationship was found between annual income prior to training and program completion (Table 4).

TABLE 4

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ANNUAL INCOME PRIOR TO TRAINING AND PROGRAM COMPLETION

N = 152*						
Program Completion	Annual Income					
	Less than $750		$750-2,999		$3,000 & over	
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Completed	29	64	44	70	34	77
Did not complete	16	36	19	30	10	23
	45	100	63	100	44	100

*Does not include 25 participants who were placed directly on a job and 16 others for whom datum was not available.

While trainees with previous income of less than 750 dollars had a 36% dropout rate, only 23% of those with income of 3,000 dollars or more failed to complete the program. Other employment variables such as weeks worked annually and years in labor force showed similar trends. These findings are similar to those of Wolfbein (18:156). He notes that occupational training programs are usually most successful with those students who were initially most employable.

THE STUDY PROBLEM

GLAC is an on-going program which implements some educational principles which have wide support in the literature. It is designed for small groups of rather homogeneous learners and strives to respect their integrity and background. While vocationally oriented, the program places great emphasis on the individual and his self-concept. The question then arises: How well has the pro-

TABLE 5

EVALUATION OF VARIOUS PARTS OF THE PROGRAM BY FORMER TRAINEES IN TERMS OF THEIR HELPFULNESS IN PREPARING THE TRAINEE FOR WORK OR SCHOOL AFTER TRAINING

N = 49					
Part of the Program	Evaluation (no. of trainees)				Weighted Average Value*
	Not included in program**	Didn't help	Helped some	Helped a lot	
Math	12	3	8	26	2.62
Vocabulary	11	3	10	25	2.58
Reading	19	2	13	25	2.58
Group Counselling	13	2	13	21	2.53
Individual Counselling	17	3	13	16	2.41
Films, Filmstrip and Slides	5	4	23	17	2.27
Indian History and Culture	21	2	17	9	2.25
Taking Tests	12	5	18	14	2.24
Interviewing Practice of Techniques	9	6	20	14	2.20
Guest Speakers	12	6	19	12	2.16
Two Week Orientation	26	4	14	5	2.04
Records & Tapes	13	7	22	7	2.00
Field Trips	25	7	11	6	1.96
Money Management and Budgeting	19	10	17	3	1.77
TOTAL	184	64	218	202	2.29

*Based on a value of 1 for didn't help, 2 for helped some and 3 for helped a lot. We assumed an equal interval of "value" between the three values.

**Includes no response. This figure is relatively high because a number of trainees completed training very early and were therefore not exposed to many parts of the program.

gram succeeded? Has it been a positive influence on its participants? Educational researchers (1, 3) believe further investigation of programs using formats similar to the GLAC is needed. This was the primary aim of this study.

STUDY DESIGN AND PROCEDURES

Two measures, job improvement after training and the trainees' evaluation, were used to evaluate the GLAC program. Improvement in the trainees' job situations was determined by comparing annual income, hourly wage on most recent job, and weeks employed annually before and after training.

To determine the relationship between training and job improvement, a number of other factors such as the trainees' education, social and economic status and the number of jobs available had to be taken into account. Previous research has shown that these factors affect both job improvement and training success (4, 5, 6). A limiting factor of the study is that the number of jobs available could not be controlled.

The second measure, trainee evaluation, was a more subjective criterion used in evaluating the program. Only those who completed the entire program were selected for this portion of the study. Those who were placed directly on a job (25) and those who quit or were terminated from the program (48) were not included as they had not received all the services of the GLAC. Data were collected via a questionnaire mailed to 113 trainees. Forty-three percent (49 out of 113) of the questionnaires were returned. This low return rate was partially due to a lack of current addresses. Questionnaires returned and those known not to have been delivered to former trainees constituted over 70 percent of all questionnaires sent. A study of demographic background characteristics found no significant differences between respondents and non-respondents.

FINDINGS-PARTICIPANT EVALUATION

Trainees were asked to evaluate each part of the curriculum in terms of its helpfulness in preparing the trainee for work or school after training. Table 5 shows trainees felt that the programmed materials in math, vocabulary and reading were the most helpful. Group and individual counseling also received high ratings. Money management and budgeting was considered the least helpful. Field trips, records and tapes and the two week orientation program also received low ratings. Apparently trainees considered education in the more academic subjects better preparation for work (very few returned to school) than training in such practical subjects as Interviewing Techniques and Money Management.

Overall trainees were not very critical of any part of the program. Very few felt that various parts were of no help at all. When asked what they liked most about the program, most chose the counselling, Indian history and culture, and basic skills education. There was no clear agreement of weaknesses of the program. Seven respondents felt that job training could be improved and ten

TABLE 6

TRAINING BENEFITS PERCEIVED BY TRAINEES

N = 49		
Rank	Benefit	Points*
1.	Helped the trainee get a job	42
2.	Helped trainee decide on the type of work he would like to do	39
3.	Improved trainee's reading or math skills	35
4.	Learned how to apply for a job	33
5.	Learned about apprenticeships	32
6.	Gave trainee confidence in himself	32

*One point was given when a benefit was noted as "important" and two when it was noted as "most important."

suggested changes either in staffing or teaching and counselling methods. Six respondents felt that trainee discipline was a problem which needed attention.

When trainees were asked to list the most important way the program helped them, slightly less than half (46 percent) named some work related benefit and 36 percent named benefits related to personal development. Table 6 shows what trainees considered the six most important benefits of the program. The benefits are directly in line with the objectives of the program.

When trainees were asked to indicate the most important way to improve the GLAC program, 51 percent cited some aspect of the academic training while 16 percent named improvements of staff or facilities. Ten percent named improvements in on-the-job follow-up. An additional 16 percent felt that students should be provided with more information about the program before coming to Green Bay. Table 7 shows the six specific improvement suggestions given highest priority by participants in the GLAC program.

TABLE 7

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENTS SUGGESTED BY TRAINEES

N = 49		
Rank	Suggested Improvements	Points*
1.	Teach more about what one does on the actual job	39
2.	Having more field trips to see actual jobs	38
3.	Giving students more information about the program before coming to Green Bay	39
4.	More training for a longer period of time	23
5.	Having either more or better teachers and staff	21
6.	Helping students after they get on the job	21

*One point was given when a benefit was noted as "important" and two when it was noted as "most important."

Since the trainee's evaluation of the program and how it benefited him might have been influenced by how well his new job turned out, attempts were made to control this variable. Data were examined to determine any possible association between the trainees' post-program incomes, weeks employed, and hourly wages on their last jobs and their evaluation of the program. Overall, the trainees' responses to (1) the way in which the program helped them, and (2) the way it could be improved were not related to measurements of differences between jobs held before and after training.

FINDINGS-JOB IMPROVEMENT

Many trainees were successful in finding and keeping jobs during the year following training (Table 8). At the time of the follow-up study, 79 percent were employed or in school while 21 percent were unemployed. Ninety-five percent of those employed were working full time. About half of the respondents stayed on the first job they obtained after training. Overall, 46 trainees reported holding a total of 81 jobs since training. They reported being fired from only two of these jobs, while being laid off from 20 and quitting 21. Reasons given for quitting jobs varied widely. They included such things as finding the jobs different from what they had expected, not liking the town or area where they were working and having the opportunity to obtain a better job. About 20 percent of the trainees returned to school or received further training since the program. (see Table 8)

Trainee jobs improved substantially after training (Table 9). Annual income rose by about $1,400 an increase of more than 60 percent over the pre-training level. Trainees worked an average of seven weeks more, an increase of 22 percent. Trainees earned 32 cents an hour more, or 11 percent, better than on the last jobs they held before training. (see Table 9)

TABLE 8

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF FORMER TRAINEES ACCORDING TO POST-PROGRAM JOB HOLDING CHARACTERISTICS

N = 46*		
Post-Program Job Holding Characteristic	Former Trainees	
	Number	Percent
Number of jobs held since training		
None	1	2
1	21	46
2	15	33
Over 2	9	19
Number of times trainee was fired		
None	44	96
Once	2	4
Number of times trainee was laid off		
None	30	65
Once or more	16	35
Number of times trainee quit		
None	30	65
Once or twice	16	35
Present employment status		
Employed	37	79
Unemployed	10	21

*Three respondents failed to complete this part of the questionnaire.

TABLE 9

CHANGE IN TRAINEE EMPLOYMENT[1]

N = 49			
Measures of Job Improvement	Before	After	Change
Annual income	$2,220	$3,625	+$1,405
Weeks worked annually	31	38	+7
Hourly wage on last job	$ 2.38	$ 2.70	+$ 0.32

[1]Group averages.

The relationship between job improvement and background characteristics was also examined. Trainees were grouped according to six background characteristics: (1) age; (2) marital status; (3) education; (4) annual income; (5) weeks of unemployment prior to training; and (6) years in the labor force. Table 10 shows that almost all groups showed improvement in hours worked and pay levels. More importantly, the trainees with poorest pre-program jobs experienced the greatest post-program gains. As a result, the gap between the "underemployed" and those with relatively better jobs prior to the program was substantially reduced.

As no control group was included in this study, conclusions about the relationship between the GLAC program and job improvement after training need some qualification. Part of the changes noted may have been due to a regression effect (see Table 10).

TABLE 10

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN VARIOUS BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS AND CHANGES IN JOB SITUATION

Background Characteristic	Mean Annual Income N = 43			Mean weeks worked annually N = 44			Mean hourly wages on last job* N = 43		
	Before	After	Change	Before	After	Change	Before	After	Change
Age									
Less than 22 yrs.	1,665	3,531	+1,866	31	38	+ 7	2.27	2.57	+.30
22 yrs. and over	3,000	3,750	+ 750	31	38	+ 7	2.51	2.88	+.37
Marital Status									
Single	1,558	3,260	+1,702	31	34	+ 3	2.18	2.51	+.33
Not Single	3,243	4,219	+ 976	31	43	+12	2.61	3.03	+.42
Education									
Less than 12 yrs.	2,422	3,405	+ 983	29	36	+ 7	2.48	2.87	+.45
12 yrs. or over	2,072	3,949	+1,877	34	41	+ 7	2.25	2.47	+.46
Incomes before program									
Less than $3,000	776	3,285	+2,509	26	37	+11	2.11	2.56	+.45
$3,000 and over	4,661	4,240	- 421	42	41	- 1	2.56	3.02	+.46
Spell of Unemployment Prior to entering program									
Less than 10 weeks	2,481	3,495	+1,014	39	38	- 1	2.37	2.45	+.08
10-52 weeks	1,831	3,816	+1,985	16	38	+16	2.38	3.05	+.67
Years in labor force									
Less than 3 yrs.	1,193	3,307	+2,114	31	36	+ 5	2.17	2.73	+.56
3 Years and over	3,304	3,975	+ 671	31	41	+10	2.56	2.68	+.12

*This measure is independent of the others. It is not an average of hourly wages over the year. It is therefore possible to have a fall in income while hourly wage shows an increase.

For example, given the type of job available to these trainees, it may be easier to raise their income from $1,000 to $3,000 than from $5,000 to $7,000. Maturation of the trainees may also have been a factor. As the majority of trainees were from 19 to 24 years old, improvement might be expected regardless of training. Possibly both of these factors had some influence. But as the changes were large, it appears that the program helped trainees to get steadier jobs with higher pay. This was especially true for those with poorer employment records.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the GLAC program was successful in helping trainees to get steadier jobs with higher pay. Since improvements were largest for those with the poorest pre-program employment record, it is clear the program is helping those who need help the most. By itself, this accomplishment is rather unique for a program of this nature.

The trainees' evaluation of the program was also positive. They felt it assisted them in obtaining better jobs and also noted increased self-confidence as an important benefit of the program. Thus substantial evidence exists that the program is successfully meeting some important needs of its clientele.

Was the success of this program due to the fact that it was specifically designed to meet the needs of a small homogeneous group of disadvantaged learners and because the learner's value set was respected? The changes in the trainees' job situations and their positive program evaluation suggest program design and cultural sensitivity were contributing factors. Evaluation of similar programs, although often informal and based on very short term evidence, lend further support to this conclusion (7, 9, 12). Pope (9:156) describing a basic education and prevocational orientation program for Montana Indians concludes: "There seems to be no doubt among Indian Americans that this is the type of program the people need." Final evidence in support of this approach comes from adult education literature which generally concurs that observing these basic principles contributes to program success.

APPENDIX

TABLE A

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO VARIOUS DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

N = 193		
Background Characteristics	Participants	
	Number	Percent
Age--Less than 18	8	4
18-21	102	53
22-25	45	23
26-44	35	18
Over 44	3	2
Ethnic group		
American Indian	167	86.5
Other	26	13.5
Disadvantaged	145	75
Not Disadvantaged	48	25
Public assistance recipient	6	4
Not Public assistance recipient	186	96

TABLE B

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO VARIOUS FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

N = 193		
Background Characteristics	Participants	
	Number	Percent
Marital Status		
Single	130	68
Married	54	28
Divorced, Separated or Widowed	8	6
Number of Dependents		
0	135	70
1-2	32	17
3-5	17	8
Over 5	9	5
Head of Household	152	79
Not Head of Household	41	21
Primary Wage Earner	152	79
Not Primary Wage Earner	41	21

TABLE C

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO VARIOUS EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

N = 193		
Background Characteristics	Participants	
	Number	Percent
Years of Schooling Completed		
Less than 12	104	54
12 and over	89	46
Received job training previous to entering GLAC	49	25.5
Did not have previous job training	144	74.5
Previous participation in federal programs		
MDTA	44	28
N.Y.C.	61	32
Job Corps	11	6
Other	8	4
None	82	42

TABLE D

NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO VARIOUS EMPLOYMENT BACKGROUND CHARACTERISTICS

N = 193		
Background Characteristics	Participation	
	Number	Percent
Years participant has been in labor force		
None-	4	2
Less than 1 year	47	24.5
1-2 years	53	27.5
3-9 years	77	40
Over 9 years	12	6
Weeks participant was unemployed during last 12 months prior to entering GLAC		
None; not in labor force	14	7
Less than 15 weeks	69	36
15-26 weeks	42	22
26-52 weeks	68	35
Weeks participant had been unemployed prior to entering program (current spell)		
None; not in labor force	37	19
Less than 5	43	22
5-14	48	25
15-26	37	19
27-52	28	15
Barrier to employment (according to W. S. F. S.)		
Age-	43	22
Education, training, skill	167	87
Poor health	7	4
Personal problems	35	18
Transportation	57	30
Child care or care of others	7	4
Conviction record	16	8
Other	19	10
None	4	2
Income of participant during last 12 months prior to training		
None, not applicable	18	9
Less than $1,500	93	48
$1,500-$3,000	32	17
Over $3,000	50	26
Hourly earning on last full time job		
Don't know, not applicable	36	19
Less than $1.50	12	6
$1.50-$2.49	87	45
$2.50-$3.49	46	24
Over $3.99	12	6

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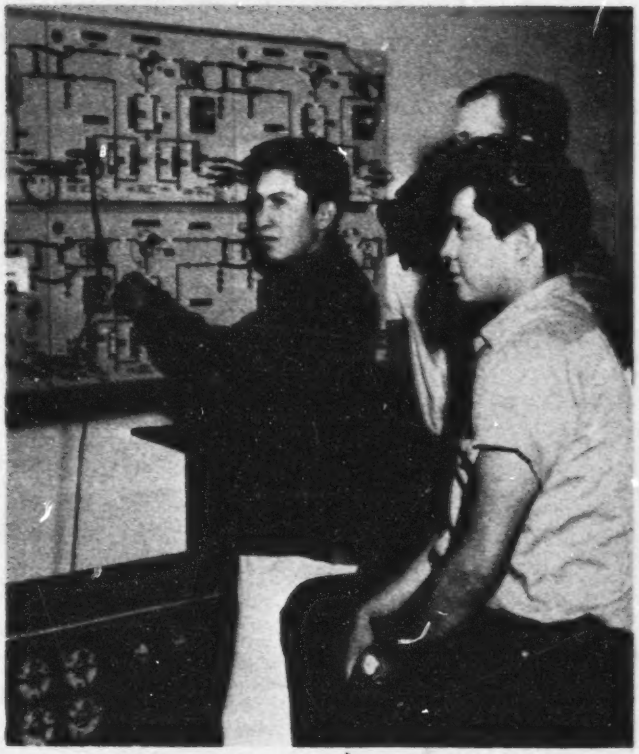

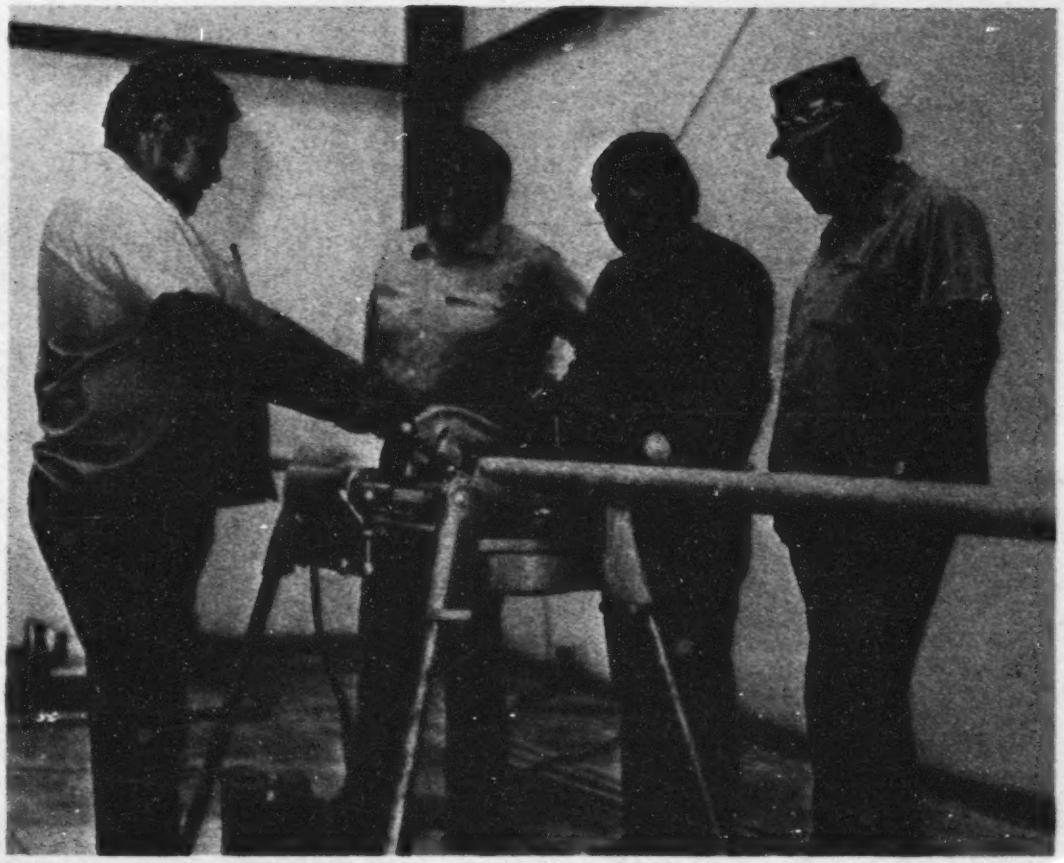

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